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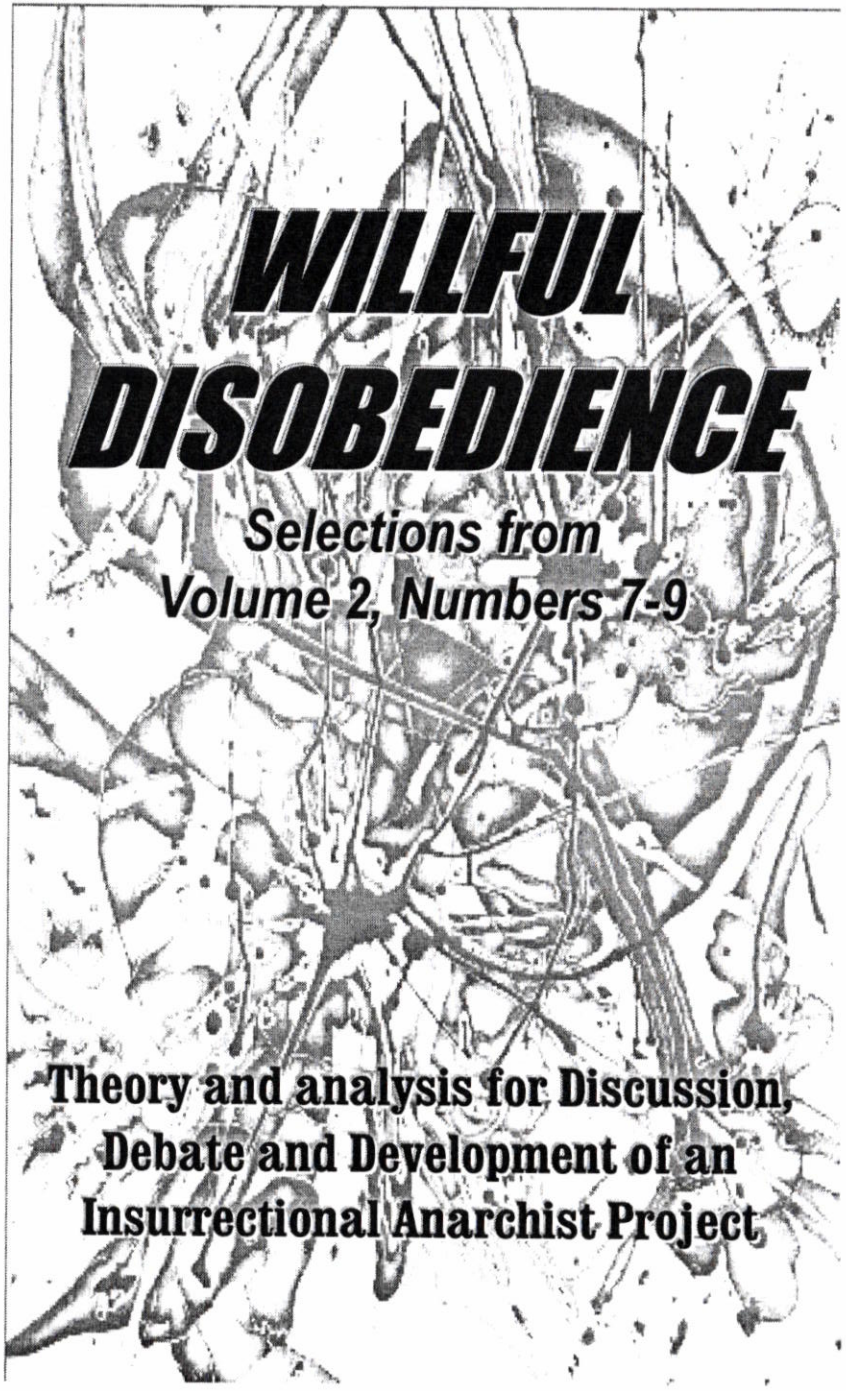

# WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE

## Selections from Volume 2, Numbers 7-9

**Theory and analysis for Discussion, Debate and Development of an Insurrectional Anarchist Project**

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Of course, a content of this sort will affect the form of the organization used in struggle. A union, party or formal federation could never have such a content. History has repeatedly shown that these organizations would, in fact, act to undermine autonomy of this sort. But the specific circumstances of the struggle and the proclivities of the insurgent individuals as they discover the concrete meaning of their individuality in relation to others in struggle will determine the specific form this content will take.

History is not just something that happens to people. It is the activity of people, and therefore this revolutionary content may take a variety of forms—but always informal, always autonomous. It is essential to learn how to recognize this content as it develops and how to identify the forms of organization—such as unions, parties and other representational bodies—that are inherently recuperative, based on the continuation of proletarianization (or other exploitative social role and relationships such as race, age or gender) and thus anti-revolutionary. With this knowledge, it is necessary to fight the latter with the same ferocity as we fight every other institution that rules us.



*These texts are intended as tools for discussion toward the development of a projectual insurrectional anarchist practice—not as final answers.—Wolfi Landstreicher*

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# ON THE NECESSITY OF SOCIAL STRUGGLE

The changes occurring in the way capital functions today present a difficult challenge to all of us who reject and seek to destroy the present social order. We are living in a world in which existence is increasingly precarious, in which possibilities for a relatively autonomous existence are narrowing, in which our physical and mental beings are increasingly attacked by the poisons this system spews out, and in which the democratic state no longer feels the need to disguise what a state is but rather complacently garners citizens' support for the most repressive measures through propaganda about "violent crime" and "terrorism". To dream of finding individual freedom outside of the terrain of social struggle—of class conflict—is not adequate. Capital has permeated all but the tiniest crevasses of the globe and its poisons pollute even these. Our so-called "autonomous zones" are nothing more than marginal projects for survival within the present order—possibly necessary in the present precarious situation, but by no means a sufficient means for confronting the reality that surrounds us with the rebellious spirit that springs from our desire for a full and vibrant existence. Now individual freedom can only exist in the struggle to destroy the present social order—a struggle that is social, that involves the violent confrontation between those who are exploited and ruled and those control the conditions of our existence—because only in this context of struggle do our decisions and actions become one, ceasing to be a choice among the options offered by this society and becoming rather our own self-determined projects.

In this light, all easy answers must be held suspect. Whether it be so-called "revolutionary gardening" or "anarchist" free food distribution, the uncritical veneration of the EZLN or of the recent mass demonstrations against global capitalism, the acceptance of the official dogmas about AIDS or about mental illness (and the consequent acceptance of medical expertise), the simplistic generalizations about gender and sexuality put forth in so much feminist ideology and the equally unanalyzed (and often subtly racist) conceptions of race many "anti-racists" embrace, every easy answer silences the questioning essential to



# OF FORM AND CONTENT

Recently I read a book called *Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy: 1976-78*. It describes an uprising that happened in Spain just after the death of Franco. The level of proletarian revolt at the time was the highest that had been experienced in Spain since the 1930's. The descriptions and analyses of events were certainly inspiring.

At the time, the insurgent proletarians did not act through the unions or parties that claimed to be their representatives—organizations that are well known for their reliance on compromise—but rather organized their activity themselves. This organization took the form of assemblies in the neighborhoods as well as the factories. Coordination between these assemblies was carried out through revocable delegates who were to do no more than relay the decisions made by those in the various assemblies. Since this was the spontaneous method developed by the insurgent population to organize their struggle against capital and the state, as well as against capital and the state, it is worth examining.

The analyses in *Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy* make a mistake that often occurs in such analyses. The form of organization is given too much value. One is left with the idea that it was the assemblies and the system of revocable delegates as such that made the difference. But what was significant about the assemblies was not their form, but their content. In the assemblies, the separation between decision and the carrying out of the decision disappeared. The insurgents began to reappropriate the conditions of their existence and, thus, to supercede their proletarian condition. In other words, in practice, they ceased defining themselves as workers and began to define themselves as individuals struggling collectively to take back their individuality—not as an abstraction but as the practical appropriation of the capacity to create their lives as they chose with whom they chose. The assemblies could be vehicles for this, because they were specific organizations of struggle, not formal membership organizations with platforms and programs.

that encourage self-organization and self-activity in revolt. Only such self-organized revolt could ever create the indomitable individuals who would stop the rise of a new dominating power at its conception. Only in such a practice do we begin to see the glimmer of the new world we seek. Nothing is guaranteed by this, but if we hedge our bets in order to guarantee everything in advance, we have already lost.



revolutionary struggle and individual freedom and leaves us impotent before the present horrors. If those of us who want to bring the state, capital and the entirety of this civilization down are to be strong in our attack, we will have to turn a pitiless and savage eye of critique on all the givens and commonplaces not only of the world of power, but also of the so-called radical movements that have failed to give us the powerful weapons we essential to our project of destroying this order. We can expect no saviors to come save us, no miracles to drop our revolution from the sky, no panaceas or wonder drugs to cure our ailing world. It is up to us to develop our tools, to hone our weapons, to create a revolt that is strong, intelligent and fierce. In the face of the present reality anything less becomes a prop for the present toxic reality.

# *ILLEGALITY*

*(This article first appeared in* Insurrection, *issue 4, May 1988)*

Simply spreading facts that have been distorted or concealed by the institutional information system constitutes an "illegal" action. Not against one precise law (except in the case of the so-called 'State secret'), but something that goes against the management of social control on which the State's very possibility of having its laws respected is based.

A wide area of behavior exists therefore that attracts the attention of the state's repressive organs just as much if not more than that which clearly breaks a specific law.

It can be extremely damaging to the project of State control for certain news to be in circulation at a given moment, at least as damaging as actions falling into the "illegal" category.

This shows that the line between "formal" legality and that of "real" legality fluctuates according to the repressive projects being put into action.

It varies according to the relationship between State and capital at a given time, and this is established less through recourse to precise laws than through a myriad of controls and dissuasions that only evolve into actual repressive actions in specific cases.

**Relation between politics and illegality**

Basically all political critique remains within the field of legality. In fact it bolsters the social fabric and allows it to overcome certain defects and deficiencies caused by capital's contradictions and some excessively rigid aspects of the State.

But no political critique can reach the total negation of State and capital. If it did it would become a social critique—as in the case of anarchist critiques—and would cease to be a constructive contribution to the institutional fabric, and so becomes "illegal".

Periods of institutional and social equilibrium can exist that allow the existence of social critique of a radically anarchist nature, but that does not alter the substantially "illegal" character of this critique.

On the other hand, even behavior that comes heavily under the jurisdiction of the penal code can be considered differently in the



every possibility is a gamble. No one would claim otherwise. Among the possibilities opened by an insurrectionary break is that of the return of domination. But providing such a potential power with the tools it would need to establish itself, institutional structures for defining and controlling social relationships, would only make their task easier. Institutions do not prevent domination; indomitable individuals do.

So the question is not that of what structures to create to replace those we destroy, but of how to go about destroying the present social order in such a way that we transform ourselves into indomitable individuals capable of creating and transforming fluid relationships reflective of our dreams and aspirations.

We all have a great capacity for self-organization. It is expressed every day as we go about our life, though in a form that is constrained to follow the limiting channels of the institutions that surround us. Proposals for counter-institutions and blueprints defining the new society in advance are simply more constraining channels, games of politicians looking for adherents to their cause. Such programs could only produce a society as alienated as the present one where the lives of individuals have already been defined for them before they even start living. Thus, in these kinds of proposals, the world that I see as the motivating force of anarchist struggle, the world in which every individual can create her life as he sees fit, has already been suppresses and the framework for new forms of domination set in place.

If, rather than starting from our fear of social rupture, our fear of upheaval, our fear of the unknown, we start from our dreams and aspirations and our capacity for self-organization, the need for programs, institutions and blueprints disappears. It becomes clear that what is necessary is revolt, insurrection, the destruction of the institutions that dominate our lives, or to put it more clearly, self-organized attacks against the institutions of domination. Rather than become politicians proposing programs and institutional frameworks into which to channel the struggle and seeking adherents to our programs, it makes much more sense for us to be comrades in struggle practicing and proposing methods of struggle free of formalization and institutionalization

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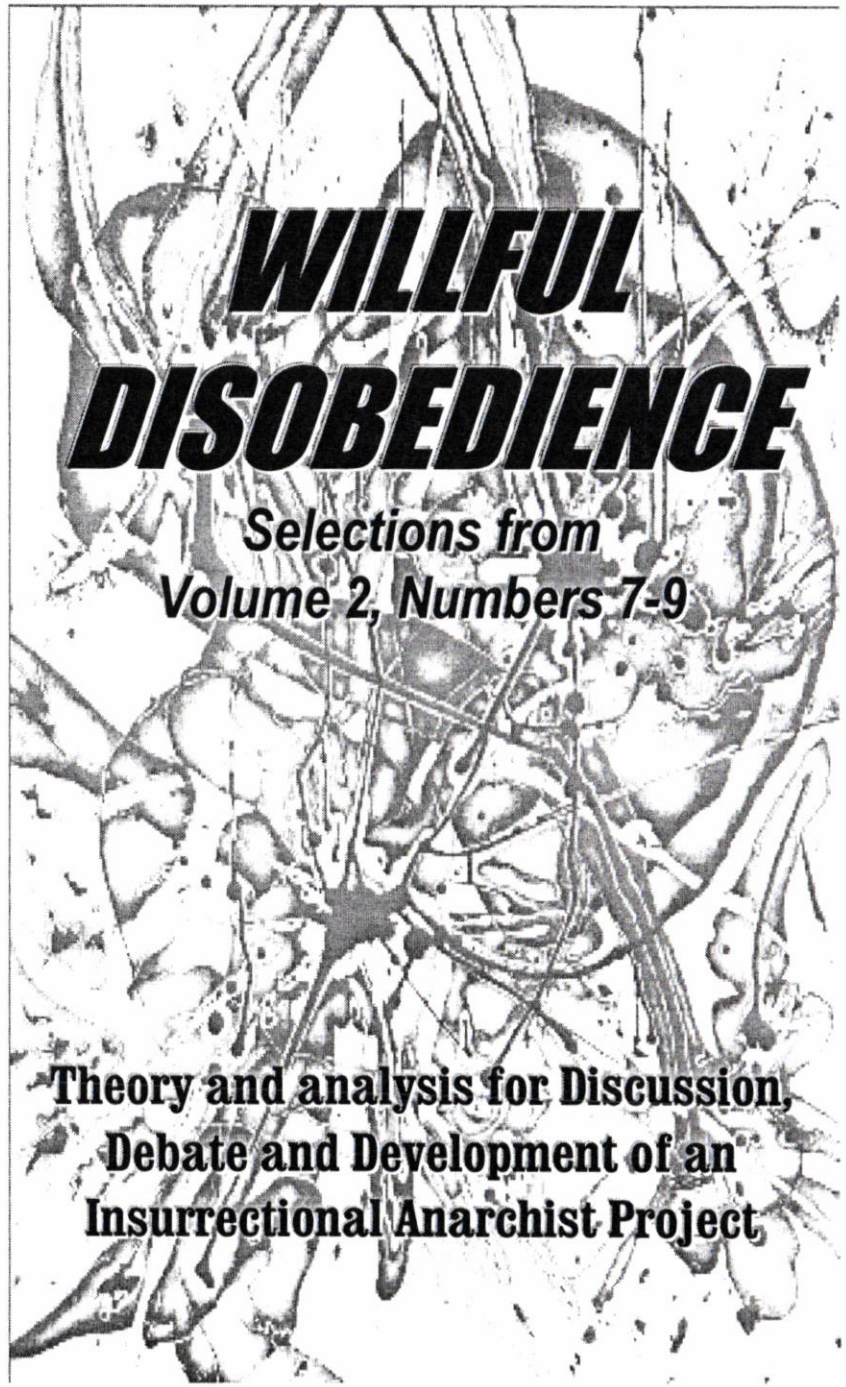

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counter-institutions to describe these functions shows. The fundamental function of every institution—what makes it an institution rather than a project, an activity, a free relationship—is the alienation of the creative energy of individuals and their capacity to grasp the conditions of their existence in order to take control of them and channel them into the reproduction of the social order and so of domination and exploitation. It has been said many times, but I will say it again: it is our activity that creates the conditions of our existence. Institutions simply take control of this activity to guarantee the continuation of that which is.

The idea that counter-institutions would function in a significantly different way is an illusion already exposed by the proponents of this method themselves when they tell us that the mechanisms of social life must not be interrupted. The very existence of a social life that can be considered as mechanistic originates in the alienation of our creative energy and our capacities. If each of us is to become the creator of his own existence in association with whom she chooses, then social life must cease to be a mechanism into which we are fitted like gears or cogs. It is necessary that we reappropriate our creative energy and the conditions of our existence so that we can carry out essential social functions in terms of our desires not in terms of social reproduction—society is only useful as a tool for the full realization of our lives. In itself, it has no value.

In this light, it should be clear that the revolution toward which we anarchists make our efforts would be far more than a mere interruption of the mechanisms of social life. It would aim to destroy these mechanisms in order to free social life from a mechanistic, instrumentalist framework, to transform it into a tool for individual realization. Such a project not only has no need for institutions; it is by its nature anti-institutional. It requires a fluidity that corresponds to our passions and desires, to our individuality. There could not be a blueprint for such a world; there couldn't even be an outline. Any institution would be its enemy, the potential framework in which a new authority could arise.

So the argument for counter-institutions has gotten it backwards. Certainly, a disruption of the social order that opens



light of a relationship of a political kind. For example, the armed struggle of a combatant party is undoubtedly an illegal action in the formal sense of the word, but at a given moment it can become functional to the State and capital's projects of recuperation and restructuring. Here it ensues that a possible agreement between combatant party and State is not impossible.

This is not as absurd as it seems. The combatant party puts itself within the logic of destabilizing the existing ruling power for the construction of a future power that is different in form but identical in substance.

In this project, as soon as it is realized that there is no outlet for a military confrontation they make a deal. The amnesty that is being talked about so much in Italy today with the Red Brigades is one such deal.

As we can see, while simple anarchist critique—radical and total in content—always remains "illegal", even the armed struggle of combatant parties can at a given moment enter the domain of "legality". This clearly demonstrates the "fluctuating" nature of legality and the State's capacity to adapt this to levels of social control.

**The exercise of control**

The instruments of repression only use brute force minimally. They function to a far greater extent as instruments of social control preventively.

This is applied through a series of provisions for all the forms of potential illegality and deviant behavior. Potential illegality comes within the law today, but the farseeing eye of the censor looks ahead to foresee their possible outcome. In the same way social deviance today might be a possible object of study or surprise, tomorrow it could be a concrete manifestation of social subversion.

## WHAT IS THE MILITANT

What is a militant? What is the left? Leftists altogether could be defined as the international association of specialists in oppression. From racism to sexism to ageism to class oppression to looksism to homophobia and so forth, leftists study, quantify and aspire to own each different sort of oppression. A racial nationalist who presents him or herself as the only authority on the feelings, ideas and aspirations of black or latino people is one classic example of a leftist. A feminist academic who presents her or himself as the only authority on the feelings, ideas and aspirations of women is also a classic leftist.

As specialists in oppression, leftists are oriented towards noticing, intensifying and managing feelings of powerlessness. From welfare workers to unionists to national liberation armies, leftists seek to establish themselves as the sole representative of one or another type of oppression. They then sell the control of this oppression to the highest bidder. Professed feminists work in the child-service agencies which terrorize poor families by stealing their children.

The leftist militant derives their need for constant action from their cultivation of guilt. The need for action and the cultivation of guilt soon overwhelms any consciousness of the larger purpose of their action. Soon the domination of leftism, of guilt politics, becomes more important than any positive outcome of the activity.

Since the leftist specializes in particular oppressions, their focus is on spreading the awareness of the feelings of oppression. From christian twelve-step programs to maoist "criticism, self-criticism sessions", leftist use a feeling of powerlessness as the driving force to increase their influence. By the same token, the leftist must make dishonesty, fear and irrationalism their main way operating. The gulags of Soviet "communism" are a good model of fully developed leftism.

For the abolition of capitalism, militantism and moralism.

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the proponents of counter-institutions have more foresight than this. They would have us forge the new chains and build the new prisons now in order to avoid the encounter with the unknown, with a wild world that may make our lives unpredictable. At least this new prison would be self-managed.

The actual counter-institutions that have been created are rarely anything more than alternative businesses, charities, NGO's and the like. They offer no challenge to the present social order, but integrate quite well into its framework becoming dependent upon it. Certainly, anarchist bookshops, infoshops and publishers can be useful tools, but they are hardly models for a world in which every individual is free to determine her life as she sees fit with full access to all he needs to do so since they have little choice but to comply with the requirements of the economy. Undoubtedly, these counter-institutions would fall with the collapse of the social order upon which they depend.

From an anarchist perspective, perhaps the most absurd of the counter-institutional proposals is one that originates in libertarian municipalism, the proposal for the creation of institutions for directly democratic decision-making. (I will not go into the critique of democracy here, having done so several times in the past.) It seems to me that the institutionalization of decision-making is the basic description of socio-political authority. The power of decision is taken from the individual and placed into the hands of the institution representing society. This institution then decides for the individual, requiring that the individual abide by that decision. A structure of this sort is already an authority, a government. When it encounters self-willed individuals who refuse to abide by its decisions, would it refrain from creating further institutions to enforce its decisions—institutions which would constitute a state? In any case, there is nothing anarchist about this proposal; it is inherently authoritarian.

While in practice the conception of counter-institutions has only succeeded in producing mirror images of mainstream institutions, its theoretical foundation is a fallacy. The assumption that the institutions of domination serve any necessary social function that must be continued when they are destroyed is groundless as the inability of the proponents of

## COUNTERING INSTITUTIONS

The method one proposes for carrying out the struggle against the present order reflects the sort of existence one desires. The anarchist project has its origin in the desire of individuals to create their lives for themselves, on the basis of their own passions, inclinations and capacities. This aspiration becomes insurrectional when it confronts the institutions that presently define social relationships and determine the conditions of existence and the individual recognizes the necessity of destroying these institutions in order to realize this desire.

The dream of unfettered, self-determined life is the positive impulse that moves us to rebel. But it is not a blueprint for a new social order. It does not provide the answers in advance, but rather raises questions and draws us into the unknown. It presents us with the task of destroying our prison so that we can discover what lies beyond its walls.

Some anarchists find such a dream inadequate. They desire certainties, clear visions and answers. They come up with plans, schemes, programs and blueprints of the new society—usually based on models from some real or imagined past. But perhaps the proposal that I find the strangest is the one that calls us to start creating counter-institutions now to replace the institutions of domination.

The contention behind this proposal is that the institutions through which domination is maintained also serve essential functions for the maintenance of social life. Since the mechanisms of social life must not be interrupted, it is necessary to put new "non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian" institutions in place to take over these functions. Should we fail to do so, we would be leaving the field open for new form of domination to arise, one that may be even worse than the present form. This is what we are told.

And the questions are raised: "With what shall we replace the state?" "With what shall we replace capitalism?" It amazes me when anarchists ask such questions with a straight face. Does one replace the hated chains which held one captive? Does one rebuild the burnt-down prison from which one has escaped? But



## THE EZLN IS *NOT* ANARCHIST:
### Or Struggles at the Margins and Revolutionary Solidarity

***In a future revolutionary period the most subtle and most dangerous defenders of capitalism will not be the people shouting pro-capitalist and pro-statist slogans, but those who have understood the possible point of total rupture. Far from eulogizing TV commercials and social submission, they will propose to change life…but to that end, call for building a true democratic power first. If they succeed in dominating the situation, the creation of this new political form will use up people's energy, fritter away radical aspirations and, with the means becoming the end, will once again turn revolution into an ideology.***
***—Gilles Dauve***

The current restructuring of capital and its global expansion intrudes to an ever greater extent in to the lives of those on its margins. Peasants and indigenous people in non-Western, so-called "third world" nations, who have maintained some level of control over their subsistence up to now, are finding themselves forced to leave their lands or conform their activities to the needs of the world capitalist market simply to survive. It is, therefore, not surprising that movements of resistance against the various aspects of capitalist intrusion have arisen among these people in many parts of the world.

In previous issues of *Willful Disobedience*, I have written about the West Papua Freedom Movement (OPM). This movement of the indigenous people West Papua, many of whom continue to live as they did for centuries before any colonial powers arrived, against their Indonesian rulers is quite clear about refusing "modern life"—that is, the state, capital and everything that industrial civilization imposes. Or as they have said in communiqués: "We want to be left alone!" But this is the

one thing that capital and the state will never grant. Although the OPM has sent delegates to demand talks with the Indonesian government, the West Papuans are increasingly aware of the futility of such negotiations. Recent communiqués talk increasingly of fighting to the death if necessary. After all, succumbing to the intrusion of capital would mean their spiritual death in any case. Their clarity about what they do not want has probably played an important part in guaranteeing that this movement, though armed, has never developed a separated military body, but rather has fought using methods traditional to their cultures. On the other hand, they have not completely escaped the ideology of nationalism, or at least its use in an attempt to have some credibility before world opinion. Still, this movement stands for having very few illusions about what the civilized social order and its institutions have to offer.

Another struggle at the farthest fringes of capitalist expansion is that of the people of Bougainville, an island about five miles west of the Solomon Islands, which has been under the rule of Papua New Guinea (not to be mistaken for West Papua) since 1975. The people of this island were pushed to revolt when CRA, an Australian subsidiary of Rio Tinto Zinc, installed a copper mine, causing hundreds of locals to lose their homes, lands and fishing rights, as well as destroying much of the jungle. The mine expanded until it was a half kilometer deep and seven kilometers in diameter. Protests, petitions and demands for compensation proved ineffective. So in 1988, a handful of islanders stole explosives from the mining company and began to destroy its structures and machinery. When the Papua New Guinea (PNG) government sent in its armed forces, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) was formed to battle the PNG military and their Australian advisers. Armed only with homemade guns, dealing with a total blockade of the island by Australian boats and helicopters and largely ignored by the outside world, the people of Bougainville have nearly achieved autonomy. A peace process began in 1997 and those PNG soldiers still on the island have been confined to their barracks. An independent governing authority has begun to develop—certainly to give credibility in the eyes of the states of the world to an autonomous Bougainville—and this will likely have a



want any scandal, bears a fundamental weight on things. In such an environment it is even possible for abortion to be denied to a girl who has been raped.

Violence is practically subscribed to by a power structure which itself exercises a double violence on the population: on the girl who must submit to the decisions made by the family and the rest of the village; and on the boys.

They are all more concerned with obeying laws and morality than about the life of this young woman.

We must begin to shout our rage again, but not by asking for more severe laws or the application of new ones: this only helps the system to castrate any possible search for freedom, our own and that of others, men and women alike.

If we believe that the practice of rape is born from a precise social condition, then we must not humiliate ourselves with demands for laws that only play the game into the hands of those who rape and exploit us daily.

We are not interested in whether those who raped the girl are found guilty or innocent. That would be too easy. We must fight the whole structure that contributes to creating the idea of violence against women and against emarginated people and proletarians in general. And, as usual, the latter, instead of beating up the bosses, are fighting among themselves, numbing their minds with all the shit that power produces. Violence often grows from conditions of poverty and survival that create the need to possess at all costs what one cannot have through practices of freedom, be it sex or any other part of normal activity.

If we want to overcome this profound contradiction between the request to be "regimented" and a search for liberation within human beings, then we must struggle in our own way and with our own instruments against all the relations of dominion that generate violence. Perhaps that day in Militello the boys would have preferred to have beaten up a priest or to have created some perspective for a less rotten life. Today they are locked up in a cell and are asking themselves why. The state will pardon their misdeed, but they will always remain convinced that all that, even their very punishment, was right and fits into the normal way of things.

# THE VIOLENCE OF POVERTY

by
Patrizia
**(reprinted from *Insurrection*, September 1989)**

Yet another rape. But today violence against a woman is more amusing if it takes place in a group: of at leas 14. This is what happened in a village in Sicily, Militello. A fifteen year old girl was raped by boys between 11 and 18 years old all looking for adventure. An adventure with a girl whose parents had just returned to Sicily after years of emigration.

The newspapers point out one particular: the girl, who became pregnant as a result of the rape, was mentally disturbed. Her womanhood, her freedom of choice, is trampled on before she starts. First by her parents, who almost kept the fact hidden because of their shame, then the whole village, who interpreted the event as a boyish prank to defend the rapist kids, then the judge. The girl is being prevented from having an abortion. The village priest shows off his sullen moralism.

This time they couldn't even use the alibi of a miniskirt, of the seductive gaze of the continental woman who—they say—attracts men and distracts them from their good feelings of father, husband or brother.

In that environment there is a more subtle violence, a violence that comes from ignorance and fear. The ignorance of the boy rapists who pursue images according to which a woman cannot be considered a human being to be respected and loved.

In the south, as in the north, sex is still something dirty, composed of violence and abuse. In Milan a girl is raped by a male nurse in a hospital bed. In Termini station in Rome eighty people stand by and watch as an attempted rape takes place on a station bench. The rapist was then covered by the crowd and escaped. So, look out. From the tiny Sicilian village to the huge metropolis, rape remains the alternative of idiots, the last beach of interior emargination and the incapacity to communicate one's rage in any other way.

But in a little village the authority of the priest, the judge, the carabinieri, the public opinion of "respectable" people who don't



negative effect on the reconstructing of the community and the environment, making it easier for Bougainville to be drawn into the world economic order. As was said in Terra Selvaggio: "The history of rebellion is much too full of liberators who transform themselves into jailers and radicals who 'forget' their programs of social change once they've seized power." Nonetheless, the small dimensions of the island combined with the absence of any urban centers makes the process of construction of state power difficult. And the determination of the people not to allow the mine to reopen is their best protection against the expansion of capital on the island.

While the indigenous people of West Papua and Bougainville have not really yet been integrated in to the capitalist market at all—giving them certain advantages both in terms of clarity about what they have to lose and in terms of knowledge of the still mostly wild terrain on which they fight—other indigenous people and small-holding peasants who were already involved in the market economy to some extent, but have maintained some real control over their subsistence, are now seeing this last bit of self-determination eaten away and are responding.

In India, groups of peasants have organized to attack genetically engineered crops. Recognizing the genetic engineering of seeds and the and the patenting of genetic structures as methods for finalizing the control of multi-national corporations over food production, even on the subsistence scale, these groups have attacked GMO fields and the property of corporations like Monsanto. But by no means do these groups have a clear critique of capitalism or the state. So alongside these direct attacks, the groups also petition the Indian state to make laws protecting them and preserving their place within the present social order. Their movement in its present form remains a movement for anti-global reform.

Similarly, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), which arose a few years ago in Brazil, combines tactics of land occupations and other forms of direct action with petitions and demands to the state and calls for legal protection and enforcement. Joao Pedro Stedile—national coordinator of this unquestionably hierarchical organization—explained a recent occupation of a Monsanto agribusiness complex in the state of

Rio Grande do Sul in terms of enforcing a strict reading of the law prohibiting the commercial cultivation of genetically modified seeds. This appeal to law to justify the occupation and destruction of GM crops indicates that some of those in this movement still see a place for themselves within the present society. But this movement also exists within the context of a larger struggle of indigenous people, workers, students and youth, including some who are consciously anarchist. Some of the methods of struggle indicate the existence of a tension toward insurrection that runs counter to the reformist tendencies.

Large-scale social conflict also broke out in Bolivia last year. In April, the Bolivian ruling class in conjunction with British multi-national attempted to privatize water. In protest, peasants organized highway blockades. Strikes and other forms of protest and direct action followed. The plans to privatize the water were shelved and the British multi-national was expelled from the country. In an attempt to stem the revolt, the government signed agreements with many groups of people, but not surprisingly reneged on them. This led to larger mobilizations in September and October. Peasants blockaded the highways, paralyzing nearly the whole country. It comes as no surprise that in a country with an indigenous majority, this movement of peasants would be clear in its denunciation of the discrimination against the indigenous peoples. Although various parties, unions and hierarchical structures have attempted to take the lead in this struggle, it has largely managed to maintain autonomous and non-hierarchical forms. Furthermore, the various groups of exploited and oppressed people in struggle have recognized the necessity of a generalized struggle. Unfortunately, some groups did have leaders, and these generally turned to reform. Nonetheless, the struggle continues, no one trusts the promises of the government and the state infrastructure is tottering.

In Ecuador, as well, at the beginning of this year, indigenous groups, along with students and workers, rose up to protest austerity measures imposed on Ecuador by the IMF as a prerequisite for getting a loan. Protesters blocked several major highways including the Pan-American Highway and there have been confrontations with soldiers. Television and radio transmission posts were occupied in Chimborazo, as well as



cellars. Then, like the POUM, the CNT was all the more effective in disarming proletarians, calling on them to give up their struggle against both the official and Stalinist police bent on finishing them off. Some of them even had the bitter surprise of being in a prison administered by an old anarchist comrade, stripped of any real power over what went on in his jail. In 1938, a CNT delegation which had gone to the Soviet Union requesting material aid did not even criticize the Moscow trials.

## From *WHEN INSURRECTIONS DIE*

*By*
*Gilles Dauve*

... the integration of Spanish anarchism into the state in 1936 is only surprising if one forgets its nature: the CNT was a union, an original union undoubtedly but a union nonetheless, and there is no such thing as an anti-union union. Function transforms the organ. Whatever its original ideals, every permanent organism for defending wage laborers as such becomes a mediator, and then a conciliator. Even when it is in the hands of radicals, even when it is repressed, the institution is doomed to escape control of the base and to become a moderating instrument. Anarchist union though it may have been, the CNT was a union before it was anarchist. A world separated the rank-and-file from the leader seated at the bosses' table, but the CNT as an apparatus was little different from the UGT. Both of them worked to modernize and rationally manage economy: in a word, to socialize capitalism. A single thread connects the socialist vote for war credits in 1914 to the participation in the government in of the anarchist leaders, first in Catalonia (September, 1936) and then in the Republic as a whole (November 1936). As early as 1914, Malatesta had had called those of his comrades (including Kropotkin) who had accepted national defense "government anarchists".

From one compromise to the next, the CNT wound up renouncing the anti-statism which was its *raison d'etre*, even after the Republic and its Russian ally had shown their real faces and unleashed their fury on the radicals of in May 1937, not to mention in everything that followed in the jails and in the secret



provincial government offices. But the indigenous leaders are demanding dialogue with the government. Of course, this is the way of leaders, and it is difficult to know to what extent this reflects the desires of the indigenous population. Certainly, the blockades and the fighting spirit indicate a will to revolt, but it could easily be sidetracked into the democratic ruse.

Probably the best known of the indigenous struggles is the one happening in Chiapas, Mexico. This struggle came into the light of day with the uprising of January 1, 1994. The strength of the insurrection, the preciseness of its targets and the general situation from which it arose aroused immediate sympathy among leftists, progressives, revolutionaries and anarchists throughout the world. The uprising was led by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN). The sympathy for this struggle is understandable as is the desire to act in solidarity with the indigenous people of Chiapas. What is not, from an anarchist perspective, is the mostly uncritical support for the EZLN. The EZLN has not hidden their agenda. Their aims are clear already in the declaration of war that they issued at the time of the 1994 uprising, and not only are those aims not anarchist; they are not even revolutionary. In this declaration, nationalist language reinforced the implications of the army's name. Stating: "We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation", they go on to call upon the constitutional right of the people to "alter or modify their form of government". They speak repeatedly of the "right to freely and democratically elect political representatives" and "administrative authorities". And the goals for which they struggle are "work, land, housing , food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace". In other words nothing concrete that could not be provided by capitalism. Nothing in any later statement from this prolific organization has changed this fundamentally reformist program. Instead the EZLN calls for dialogue and negotiation, declaring their willingness to accept signs of good faith from the Mexican government. Thus, they send out calls to the legislature of Mexico, even inviting members of this body to participate in the EZLN march to the capital, the purpose of which is to call on the government to enforce the San Andres peace accords worked out by Cocopa, a legislative committee in 1995. So we see,

regardless of the fact that they are armed and masked, the EZLN is a reformist organization. They claim to be in the service of the indigenous people of Chiapas (much as Mao's army claimed to be in the service of the peasants and workers of China before Mao came to power), but they remain a specialized military organization separate from the people, not the people armed. They have made themselves the public spokespeople for the struggle in Chiapas and have channeled it into reformist demands and appeals to nationalism and democracy. There are reasons why the EZLN has become the darling of the anti-globalization movement: its rhetoric and its aims present no threat to those elements in this movement who merely seek more national and local control of capitalism.

Of course, the social struggles of exploited and oppressed people cannot be expected to conform to some abstract anarchist ideal. These struggles arise in particular situations, sparked by specific events. The question of revolutionary solidarity in these struggles is, therefore, the question of how to intervene in a way that is fitting with one's aims, in a way that moves one's revolutionary anarchist project forward. But in order to do this, one must have clear aims and a clear concept of one's project. In other words, one must be pursuing one's own daily struggle against the present reality with lucidity and determination. Uncritical support of any of the struggles described above is indicative of a lack of clarity about what an anarchist revolutionary project might be, and such support is most certainly not revolutionary solidarity. Each of our struggles springs from our own lives and our own experiences of domination and exploitation. When we go into these battles with full awareness of the nature of the state and capital, of the institutions by which this civilization controls our existence, it becomes obvious that only certain methods and practices can lead toward the end we desire. With this knowledge, we can clarify our own projects and make our awareness of the struggles around the world into a tool for honing our own struggle against the present social order. Revolutionary solidarity is precisely fighting against the totality of an existence based on exploitation, domination and alienation wherever one finds oneself. In this light, revolutionary solidarity needs to take up the weapon of



technology. (That bodies have been reduced to reservoirs of spare organs is clearly shown by the triumph of the science of transplants, which is described with an insidious euphemism as a "frontier of medicine". But to me the reality seems much worse than pharmaceutical speculations and the dictatorship of medicine as a separate and powerful body reveals.) The food, the air, the daily relations have atrophied our senses. The senselessness of work, the forced sociality, the dreadful materiality of the chit-chat, regiment both thought and the body, since no separation is possible between them.

The docile observance of the law, the imprisoning channels into which desires, which such captivity really transforms into sad ghosts of themselves, are enclosed weakens the organism just as much as pollution or forced medication.

"Morality is exhaustion," said Nietzsche.

To affirm one's own life, that exuberance that demands to be given, entails a transformation of the senses no less than of ideas and relationships.

I have frequently come to see people as beautiful, even physically, who had seemed almost insignificant to me until a short time earlier. When you are projecting your life and test yourself in possible revolt with someone, you see in your playmates beautiful individuals, and not the sad faces and bodies that extinguish their light in habit and coercion any more. I believe that they really are becoming beautiful (and not that I simply see them as such) in the moment in which they express their desires and live their ideas.

The ethical resoluteness of one who abandons and attacks the power structures is a perception, a moment in which one tastes the beauty of one's comrades and the misery of obligation and submission. "I rebel, therefore I am" is a phrase from Camus that never ceases to charm me as only a reason for life can do.

In the face of a world that presents ethics as the space of authority and law, I think that there is no ethical dimension except in revolt, in risk, in the dream. The survival in which we are confined is unjust because it brutalizes and uglifies.

Only a different body can realize that further view of the life that opens to desire and mutuality, and only an effort toward beauty and toward the unknown can free our fettered bodies.

# THE BODY AND REVOLT

by

Massimo Passamani

The entire history of western civilization can be read as a systematic attempt to exclude and isolate the body. From Plato on, this has been seen from time to time as folly to control, impulse to repress, labor power to arrange, unconscious to psychoanalyze.

The platonic separation between the body and the mind, a separation carried out to the complete advantage of the latter ("the body is the tomb of the mind"), even accompanies the seemingly most radical expressions of thought.

Now, this thesis is supported in numerous philosophy texts, almost all except those that are alien to the rarefied and unwholesome atmosphere of the universities. A reading of Nietzsche and of the authors like Hannah Arendt has found its appropriate scholastic systematization (phenomenological psychology, idea of difference and a way of pigeon-holing). Nonetheless, or actually because of this, it does not seem to me that this problem, the implications of which are many and fascinating, has been considered in depth.

A profound liberation of individuals entails an equally profound transformation of the way of conceiving the body, its expression and its relations.

Due to a battle-trained christian heritage, we are led to believe that domination controls and expropriates a part of the human being without however damaging her inner being (and there is much that could be said about the division between a presumed inner being and external relationships). Of course, capitalist relationships and state impositions adulterate and pollute life, but we think that our perceptions of ourselves and of the world remain unaltered. So even when we imagine a radical break with the existent, we are sure that it is our body as we presently think of it that will act on this.

I think instead that our body has suffered and continues to suffer a terrible mutilation. And this is not only due to the obvious aspects of control and alienation determined by



unflinching, merciless critique of all reformist, nationalist, hierarchical, authoritarian, democratic or class collaborationist tendencies that could undermine the autonomy and self-activity of those in struggle and channel the struggle into negotiation and compromise with the present order. This critique must be based in a lucid conception of the world we must destroy and the means necessary to accomplish this destruction.

## THE WORLD SOCIAL FARCE

As cops brutally drove protesters back from Davos, using state violence to prevent demonstrations in the vicinity of the World Economic Forum, 12,000 "representatives from citizens' groups" met together in Porto Alegre, Brazil to develop an "alternative" to the economic model of the WEF. This conference, called the World Social Forum, was organized by various parties—including the Partido dos Trabalhabores that holds power in that region of Brazil—and organizations. As is typical of the left, the WSF sought to draw groups from across the radical and liberal political spectrum (and even succeeded in drawing a few anarchist and autonomous groups to participate). Thus, their rhetoric was as bland and noncommittal as their practise. Speaking of creating a different design for globalization and developing strategies for laying "the foundations for a fairer economic model", the forum as a whole emphasized "more citizen involvement", "more opportunities for democratic participation" in the global economy. While a few dissident voices—mainly from the anarchists and autonomes who made the mistake of attending this forum—called for the end of capitalism, it is clear that primary thrust of this forum was, in fact, to find a way to preserve the present social order in a more humane and democratic form, to preserve the trajectory of capitalism in a way that will allow more people to actively participate.

But let us consider: Is a death march worth continuing because we've eradicated the whips and cattle prods? Does the right of the marchers to choose who will direct the march or what the details of its continuance will involve mean anything when the basic reality remains the same, with an end that is guaranteed: death in the fullest sense—of creativity, imagination, joy and wonder, and ultimately of our physical being as well? In reality, chatter about citizen's participation and more democracy is an absurdity in a world in which more and more people are pushed from their homes and pushed into undocumented migration in the attempt to survive—thus, finding themselves excluded from citizenship and "humanity" as recognized by the state—precisely



except to the extent that they are useful in producing marketable bytes. This is because the kind of communication and coordination that can happen through the internet has already been organized before we start to use it, and it has *not* been organized in our interest, but rather in the interests of the social order of domination. Dependence on that which has already been organized by one's enemy has two significant negative effects on one's struggle: it undermines one's own creative imagination and practical intelligence—one's capacity for self-organization—and it makes one dependent on one's enemy in the coordination of one's struggle, this undermining one's ability to strike the enemy fiercely.

Those of us who desire a world free of domination and exploitation, and therefore seek to destroy the state, capital and the entire ensemble of institutions that rule us, need to organize our struggles autonomously. This means creating our own tools for communicating and coordinating our struggles. It is necessary to develop relationships of affinity based on real knowledge of each other, of each person's projects, ideas, capacities, dreams and desires. These relationships provide the basis for developing projects of action and, on a larger scale, informal networks of solidarity. Various encounters, discussions, periodicals and papers—autonomously created projects—can hone our analyses and help us to work out our methods of struggle and coordinate our activities. But the specific details are not as important as the necessity of the *self-organization* of our struggle. Only with this basis, can we know how to grasp the tools at hand and turn them to our purpose—that of destroying the present society and creating our lives in freedom. In the context of such self-organized struggles, the internet may be a useful tool, but no more than that, and only one among many—one that I would say is destined to fall with the society that spawned it. And in the midst of a real uprising, when immediate communication would be essential, would we want to be sitting at a desk in front of a screen? Or out where the real struggle is going on?

This is not to deny that within the present social context the internet can serve as a useful tool for anarchists. One can find information about struggles, actions and state repression around the world; one can avail oneself of relatively instantaneous communication often at no cost that could provide a means for coordinating specific initiatives. But this is meaningless outside the context of a real ongoing struggle against the existing the entire network of institutions that dominates our lives. As I see it, this would mean a struggle against the kind of social relations that produced the internet and the technological systems upon which it depends.

But those within anti-capitalist circles who have praised the internet so effusively have seen it as far more than a tool. For them, it is the basis for a global struggle that is non-hierarchical and can lead to a "truly democratic" world. They ignore the systematic control of relations inherent in the technology that makes it hierarchical by nature. They ignore the hierarchy inherent in democracy itself. But above all they ignore the history of the struggle of the exploited against this reality. The internet is a very recent technological innovation, not more than a generation old, and there have been revolts against domination and exploitation from the time the civilized order arose. In the heat of such struggles, people have always been able to create ways to communicate with others in struggle, ways which, though technically less instantaneous than the internet, were far more immediate and truly autonomous. It was *self-organized* communication, often face-to-face.

As an integral part of cybernetic technological control, the internet is not and cannot be an expression of self-organization. It is qualitatively different from an autonomous assembly, an affinity group or a roving group of insurgent proletarians going to meet with other insurgents to coordinate struggles. The difference is simple to explain. If we make the internet the basis for coordinating our struggles, for communicating our projects, actions and dreams, then our struggles, our projects and all that inspires them will become the kind that can be communicated through the internet—that is, projects, struggles and dreams that can be broken down into interchangeable bits of information where people, their passions and desires are of little importance



by the actions of the democratic states. Attempting to make the present social order more just and more ecological is equally absurd when one considers that it must expand in order to survive and such expansion means the increasing dissemination of the poisons necessary for economic production, the increasing spread of misery, disaster and death. In light of the present conditions of existence, the World Social Forum was a farce. Alternative methods of exploitation and domination guarantee the destruction of any life worth living as surely as the present forms do. Ultimately nothing short of the total destruction of the present social order can put an end to the death march that is our civilized reality, and all those who seek to merely restructure the methods by which this death march advances are as much my enemy as those who presently direct it. Anarchist and revolutionaries would do well to avoid being taken in by such absurdities as the World Social Farce. We have better things to do.

## I DREAM IN COLORS

Black and white—these two colors have defined so much of the American social landscape, casting their shadow over social struggles. If today on official documents and in academic studies "diversity" and "multi-culturalism" are recognized, at bottom, the dichotomy between "white" people and those who are not white remains the predominate definition of "difference", because it is an all too useful tool in the hands of those who rule us.

It is quite easy to condemn white supremacists—blatant racists and bigots purveying a small-minded, narrow view of the world that impoverishes all it touches. For these nasty and ignorant people, the situation is simple: those who are not white are dangerous and must be dealt with as such. So out come the clubs and crowbars and the hunt begins. Or, more frequently, out come the laws and cops and the prisons fill up.

But what of the anti-racists, those good white people who have nothing against their black, brown, yellow or red sisters and brothers, who are even willing to defend them? These are quick to demand that those who are not white should not be mistreated, that their rights should be protected, because they are really "just like us", they are our equals. These good, "broad-minded" people are ready to subsume everyone under that great, unified *human* race, blinding themselves to all that might threaten their abstract magnanimity.

But whether one chooses narrow-minded bigotry or broad-minded magnanimity, the result is the same: the different is made to disappear, because it must not exist; it is too frightening, too challenging. In fact the bigotry of the racist feeds on the rhetoric of the anti-racist. The doctrine of the latter, the promotion of "multi-cultural" homogenization and "diversity" as commodity, is really founded on a refusal to see that which should not need to be pointed out—that no individual is equal to any other; it fuels the fear of losing oneself. And if one has learned to define their peculiarity in racial terms, this doctrine will goad her to defend his racial heritage with ever more



## THE INTERNET AND SELF-ORGANIZATION

The current restructuring of capitalist social relations began to develop with the rise of the "information age", largely due to the growth of cybernetic and related technologies, so it is not surprising that the resistance to capitalism makes use of these tools for its own purposes. What is perhaps surprising, or at least disturbing, is the extent to which these tools have been embraced with no critical examination of the processes which produce these technologies and those under which they operate, nor of the nature of the sort of communication and organization they allow. In fact, it is not uncommon, even in anarchist circles, to come across accolades to the internet that leave the impression that this technology is what has made the organization of current struggles possible, what has allowed the present "anti-capitalist" movement to develop. At times, this praise reaches such a level that it seems to transform the internet into an icon, a symbol of the revolutionary struggle. But to the chagrin of the radical techno-fetishists, the computer lacks the romance of the machine gun, icon of so many revolutionaries of the 1970's.

In any case, such effusive praise of one specific tool is certainly peculiar, particularly when it is such an integral part of the present social order. The internet has no connection whatsoever to the development of self-organized, autonomous relationships, and from an anarchist perspective, such relationships are central to the struggle against this world. The internet is actually a system that has been developed to serve specific requirements of capital and the state, so it is delusional to think it allows free interaction and association. Its form is conducive to the degradation of knowledge into (much more marketable) bits of information, of thought into binary logic, of relationships into virtual communication—just as the machine gun is conducive to killing.

automatic and irresistible, and that it will spontaneously understand all of the obstacles blocking its interests. On a practical level, this delusional perspective would work itself out in the renunciation of all active and conscious intervention aimed at fighting against the activities of domination. Without deluding ourselves that those who built this world in their image and likeness will turn it over to us without a fight in the face of our supposed greater "technical competence" in formulating adequate solutions to social problems. The nightmare in which we live will not end in a peaceful sunset.

Although the idea is no longer fashionable, the great game of freedom cannot do without a radical break, a social upheaval. Simply because its realization has all the characteristics of a wager: it is a risk that depends to great extent on chance. On her behalf, the player only has the passion for the game and the determination of his will. We leave the reassuring promises to advertisements. It is true that we may never experience the enchantment of being in the world. It is true that we may never live our existence here, feeling instead that it is elsewhere. But why not try it? Is there really anything better for which it is worthwhile to take the trouble of living?



vehemence. Thus, the blind, abstract generosity of the anti-racist simply pushes the racist to be more narrow-minded and defensive. In the same way, the anti-racist needs the racist to whom she can respond. Without the racist whose attitudes and ignorance he can condemn, thus distinguishing herself, he'd have no way to prove his anti-racist credentials. For she, like the racist, is afraid of the different, and equally afraid of losing herself. Unlike the racist however, he does not express her fear with the club, but rather through self-deception and flattery. He does not see the arrogant and self-serving racism in her claims that " they are just like us; they are our equals". Such claims are not only insulting and arrogant, but false as well. But the anti-racist won't understand this. Prey to their own bad conscience about sharing the same skin color as the white supremacists they despise, their anti-racism becomes a symbolic martyrdom, self-deprecation indicative of their inability to step thinking in essential racial categories.

There have been attempts in recent years among revolutionaries in this country to move beyond the pathetic dichotomy that still dominates the discussion of race. Although early attempts to point out the lack of a biological basis for the concept of race have sometimes led to a lazy refusal to deal with the matter at all, there are those who have taken the next step of trying to develop an analysis of the usefulness of the concept of race to the rulers of this order for the maintenance of current social relationships. In particular, the "new abolitionists", publishers of *Race Traitor*, have made useful contributions to an analysis of how the development of the concept of the white race allowed the exploiting classes to create significant rifts between different parts of the exploited classes and to manipulate large portions of the latter into identifying with their exploiters. Such analyses indicate that these new abolitionists have moved beyond the simplistic self-righteousness of anti-racism, but there are still elements of anti-racist moralizing to be found in their ideas. Their tendency to still think in black and white (or white and non-white) may be an essential starting point for the development of their analyses that are ultimately attempting to supercede this dichotomous way of thinking. But their slogan, "Treason to the white race is loyalty to humanity", seems to

carry with it the attempt of the anti-racist to subsume all difference under that abstraction, the human race. Correspondingly, the practice to which the writers of *Race Traitor* most frequently call "white" people is the refusal of white privilege, the specific of which—as described in their writings—seem to have more to do with personal moral righteousness—and thus self-sacrifice similar to that of the anti-racists—than with the development of a revolutionary project that can bring down this society and its concept of race.

A truly revolutionary project—one that can destroy class society, domination and exploitation and open the possibility for the development of free, self-determined relations—is rooted in the desire of individuals to determine their own lives in terms of their own singularity. In this light, I do not consider any individual to be equal to any other. Profound differences abound, and among these differences which make up the uniqueness of each individual are those characteristics that could be called "racial" or "ethnic", but these are not the most fundamental characteristics. Nor do they make for the superiority or inferiority of any group. Rather they reflect that each of us is a unique being with our own history and our own way of facing the world around us. In order to create ourselves on our own terms—possible in the present only in revolt against the social order—it is necessary to examine the differences that have their basis in socially defined categories in order to overcome them, move beyond them and make them our own, servants to our singular selves. So I choose to relate to each individual not based on their racial or ethnic identity, but based on who I am and want to be and what interests and desires these individuals evoke in me.

It is this singularity, this very real difference between every individual, that is feared and rejected by both the racist and the anti-racist. The racist seeks to eliminate difference in a homogenized conception of whiteness which justifies the violent suppression of those who cannot be assimilated into this category. The anti-racist seeks to deny difference by assimilating everything into the "multi-culturalism" of commodification, offering only the murky greyness of capitalist pseudo-diversity—the "diversity" of products on the market. To move



frying pan and into the fire if we were to replace it with the old Marxist idea of a freedom that "can only bloom on this reign of necessity." With its blackmail, necessity renders only the terrain of constraint fertile, certainly not the terrain of autonomy. If freedom is elsewhere, we cease to experience shame when we do not know what will arise on the on the ashes of the prison in which we are presently enclosed.

If we want to be realists, we are finally such at bottom. A utopia cannot exist with both feet on the ground. What makes utopia subversive is the tension that it generates, the insatiability that leads it to never be contented and to never be resigned. To not look where one is going because one does not want to remain where the gaze reaches. On the other hand, the utopia that claims to be concrete, the one of modest practical reason, the one that is revealed in the contrast between the grandiosity of the ends and the cringing mediocrity of the means, the utopia of shopkeepers who want to subvert the world while still remaining at peace with every Christian neighbor, this utopia is only a reformist lie.

What else could reformism be if not the endeavor to find an artificial bridge—parties, conferences, social centers, nonprofit enterprises, rural communes, municipal lists…—capable of uniting means and ends, a supposedly unchangeable reality and the designated ideal, *after having abandoned the real forces of revolution?* Is not its psychological origin perhaps exposed by observation of the partial possibility of modifying social organization? Isn't its stimulus possibly born from the need for victory, the need to say goodbye to the long trail of defeats that the revolutionary idea has known? Couldn't its fortune derive from the radical opposition to extremism? It is of little importance to know whether its supporters sit in parliament in double-breasted suits or march in the streets in white overalls.

It is a cliché, but one worth remembering: *the world in which we live is one.* It is the world of authority, of money, of the market, of the state. It is the realm of necessity. Today in its pervasive presence, there is no elsewhere. There is no realm of freedom, miraculously preserved from the genocide in course, in which to find refuge. So if we are persuaded that existence is elsewhere, then we must realize that elsewhere here. Without deluding ourselves that the process of social becoming is

government submerges action tending to organize moments of collective participation extraneous to the presence of the state starting with a simulation in effect: 'as if' it were not there. The erosion of the aspects of existence ruled by the state mortgage can become a collective practice that makes participation trenchant if these moments are really laboratories of unheard-of resolutions for problems tied to social life…the spreading of moments of self-government acquires a sense of opposition that, from a phenomenon that is antagonistic or subordinately or subordinately reactive to a temporary lack of institutional services, is posed as an unpublished rough draft of projected organizations of society." The prose varies its range of expression, but isn't the refrain really the same?

And so the smaller one's desires are, the greater the possibility of satisfying them. The successes obtained through a realist politics cannot hide the naked reality that they have been paid for with the coin of renunciation. The "happy isle" carved out by an ocean of denials is not a free world. The "socially useful" job carried out in a small enterprise (no matter how collectively it is run) is not communism. The life passed inside the walls of "self-managed" spaces is not anarchy. Whatever their colors may be, flowers cultivated in an artificial hothouse are not the spring. The "experiments in liberation", the "moments of self-government", all these instances in which we feel that we are protagonists can certainly take place and perhaps even increase, but only to the extent to which they are granted. Only to the extent to which they would not constitute a danger to the social order that they would like to weaken. Only to the extent to which they represent the crumbs that fall at our feet from the table of those who rule us. A warning to insurgents: the state is not going to fade away on its own and it certainly has no intention of killing itself.

Until recently, revolutionary hope expressed the secular disguise of a messianic vision. The *great dusk* represented a kind of Final Judgment capable of splitting history in two, with the world before the revelation quickly disappearing as freedom, which has finally been acquired, erases the last traces of original sin. The disappearance of such millenarian assurances will never be adequately toasted. Only now we would be jumping out of the



beyond this greyness requires precisely that we embrace that difference which cannot be commodified—the marvelous uniqueness of each individual. But such an embrace demands that we truly wrestle with those social concepts and categories in which the present world strives to enclose this difference with the aim of destroying these cages. Such an effort is essential if we ever want to dream in colors.

# THE FULLNESS OF LIFE WITHOUT MEASURE

The reasons for eradicating every form of rule can be enumerated repeatedly to infinity without inspiring a single act of revolt. The fact that this civilization, built on domination and exploitation, is really just a clock-work march toward death could just easily move one to give up or fall into the logic of emergency that so easily leads to the acceptance of band-aid measures and dependence on the experts of the ruling order. All the lists of the excesses of exploitation, of environmental destruction, of specific acts of repression and so on remain in the realm of the quantitative, and thus continue to be based in the methodology and mentality of the economy and the state. Therefore, they provide a fine basis for the specializations of the various leftist movements seeking a more just economy, a more democratic political order, a mere change in institutional structures, but the anarchist impulse, the hatred of every form of rule, the urge to destroy the totality of a civilization based on exploitation and domination clearly has its origin elsewhere.

In the heart of a riot one can catch a glimpse of the spirit of revolt without a price. It is there in the glee of the looter who, when asked how she felt about stealing, replied, "Nobody's stealing. It's all free today." It is there in the festive atmosphere in the midst of battle with the forces of order. Here the economy has been eclipsed. The self-sacrifice and veneration of survival that define the leftist schemes of participatory democracy and counter-institutions to guarantee that the revolution happens with as little upheaval of people's daily lives as possible are nowhere to be seen. Life has broken out in its fullness for a moment, provoked most often by shared rage, and the rioters are willing to risk their all at that moment, not out of a sense of sacrifice to any cause, but in order to embrace the quality of a moment of real life. However, in the moment of the riot this is not a conscious and willful decision, but a spontaneous irruption that will burn itself out if it doesn't become more focused and conscious, if it



economy with social revolution"). Under the rule of capital, happiness is elsewhere; this is impossible to doubt in view of the chains that leave their mark on our flesh, but its seed still had to hatch under the snow and one only needed to wait for the end of winter to see it blossom. This was what we were taught until recently. But now this certainty in the spontaneous succession of seasons has frozen to death along with the sporadic swallow that was occasionally seen on the horizon. And the weather becomes ever harsher. One cannot keep waiting for the spring. It is necessary to crate this spring, but the task is not easy. So why not just say that it has already started?

This is the way that some frozen victims of the social ice age have decided to get around this obstacle. A new ideological creed has replaced the old one; it is decided that the realm of freedom no longer comes after the realm of necessity, but rather flanks it, exists together with it. Freedom is no longer built on the ruins of the palaces of power, something that would first require their toilsome destruction. Instead it is built on their margins. The elsewhere in which one can finally be oneself is no longer an absent totality that is realized in the future, as soon as possible, but a partiality, already operating in the present. The state is not destroyed, but ignored, deserted, abandoned in favor of a "bipolar society"—in the stalinist version—or a "non-state public sphere"—in the libertarian version—into which one can enter, passing through the "crevices" of the capitalist mega-machine.

It is only by hearing these two bells—the stalinist bell and the libertarian bell—at the same time that one can clearly perceive the identity of their ringing. Here the first one tolls: "It is necessary first of all to tend to the construction of these experiments in liberation, rather than tending to the organization of the proletarian masses to the end of the rupture or supercession of the general arrangements of the system, because it is possible to carve out spaces of liberation even in the absence of this rupture or supercession, or precisely because liberation will come to pass through the gradual, molecular and interwoven expansion of these spaces. Thus, in this case, the state and the market would not be 'overthrown', but rather 'marginalized', 'extinguished'." And now let's listen to the second: "Self-

to escape the blind alley into which we are forced. Even the activity of one who wants to put an end to a social system based on money doesn't manage to avoid prolonging it, crashing against the reef of social reproduction.

Against a politics that was always a tool in the hands of the ruling class, a new parliament (however alternative) is elected. Against an economy preoccupied exclusively with its profits, new credit institutions (however ethical) are founded. Against a technology that does not facilitate life but rather renders it superfluous, one demands its mass distribution (however democratic). Against work that does not realize the individual but rather alienates her, one asks for its multiplication (however minimal). Against a power that causes infinite harm, one calls for its renewal (however revocable). Against this world one demands…this world (whatever small changes may be changed).

Round and round in circles. The intolerable world in which we live is also the only world that we know, the only one we have experienced. Every project of social transformation is based on knowledge—on that with which we are familiar. Starting from these premises, we analyze, we criticize, we denounce every sort of social poison present on our planet. But even though we are aware of the necessity to spew the poison out of our organism, we are seized with doubts: will we survive such a drastic treatment? What will become of us afterwards? In order to avert the risk that such an eventuality allows, we go in search of the formula for a painless antidote. Medical science rushes to our aid: the antidote to poison is a minimal dose of the poison itself (and the "cure" very quickly reveals itself to be not only useless but harmful, because it has no other effect than that of rendering the poison itself still more virulent). Thus, the critique of this world ends by proposing its models once again. Round and round in circles. But this is the surest way not to bring this world down.

Until recently, it seemed certain that the realm of freedom could find no place within the realm of necessity. The latter was limited to predicting and preparing the conditions for the advent of the former (from this we derive all the eulogies to the "development of the productive forces" and other pleasantries that favored "the mysterious identification of the capitalist



doesn't begin to transform itself into an insurrection against the present existence.

What happens in a riot that creates the festive atmosphere is the temporary opening of possibilities that do not normally exist within the present social reality. That reality has momentarily broken down and the love of life, the desire for intense and passionate existence, has rushed in. It is a realm of dream in which everything seems possible, in which rage has mixed with joy, in which the desire for revenge has blended with the desire for a completely different way of life. And such dreams can only exist in revolt against the ruled and quantified survival imposed by the social order.

The anarchist (and here I do not mean that brand of leftist whose careful calculations have led them to the ideological stance against authoritarianism and statism along with all the "isms" on their revolutionary balance sheets) makes a conscious decision to embrace this fullness of life against all odds, to refuse to count the cost, choosing rather to rise up against economy in all its forms. She will not sacrifice his life—not even for the grandest cause—but will rather gamble it joyfully on the chance that all of life might be transformed in accordance with her dreams.

If not based on such a decision, anarchism is merely another political ideology. But starting from this choice to grasp life in all its fullness, our projects of revolt can be carried out with a passionate intelligence capable of analyzing the world and our activity in it on the basis of our desire to be the creators of our own existence. This passionate intelligence appears in riots, but it only develops as a tool for revolution when coupled to a projectual will. From this willful joy in life, this willingness to bet one's life against all odds in hope of total freedom, the hatred of all rule is born, and with it the project of destroying this horrific civilization.

# THE MERCHANTS OF LIFE

by
Val Basilio
**(translated from *Diavolo in Corpo* #3)**

Thirty years ago, a Belgian situationist—whose decayed radical subjectivity is now in an advanced state of decomposition—noted in his most famous work that: "Power, if only it were human, would be proud of the number of potential encounters it has successfully prevented."

One of the encounters that was avoided according to the suggestive proposition of the author was that of the French anarchist Albert Libertad with the Italian artist Giorgio di Chirico. The former—burning his identity documents—the latter—drawing heads without faces. Both are understood as denouncing the operation of organized annihilation carried out by the social order in its confrontations with the individual. Better not to have a name or a face than to be a mere reflection of social conventions. The refusal of the identity that is assigned to us by the state is the first step to affirming our individuality. Starting from completely different experiences and presuppositions, the anarchist and the artist had arrived—each in his own way—at analogous conclusions.

But this play of affinities never came together and the encounters missed on the terrain of the reappropriation of our existence does not stop at this single case.

Anyone who might be interested in curbing the process of commodification that is transforming all of our life into a vast supermarket—where adventure is booked in a travel agency, the appetite is satisfied with pre-cooked meals ready in five minutes, creativity serves only to decorate advertising posters and play consists more than anything else of operations of exchange—will certainly find the correspondence of aims between deeds and persons from the same era, but different continents, interesting.

**Argentina,1927**. Here, as in many other parts of the world, the night of August 22 is a night of vigil. On the plaza and in the



# ELSEWHERE

by
H.T.
(translated from *Diavolo in Corpo* #3)

*"Real life is absent. We are not in the world."—A. Rimbaud*

Existence is elsewhere. By now, we know this much too well. We cannot find the fullness capable of giving any meaning to our time on this earth either in a job that sends us traveling along through the crossroads of the career or in a daily life from that no longer holds any wonder for us. We may be able to *have*, but we no longer know how to *be*. All the things that surround us and are within our reach in the form of disposable commodities to be accumulated are only scented balms for mortal wounds, for festering open sores caused be the renunciation of the vital minimum. The vital minimum is the possibility of creating and acting with authentic meaning, in other words, autonomy.

The critique of the miserable daily life that people lead today cannot be separated from the critique of the social order that determines it: capitalism. Our whole world has been shaped by exchange values; it has been built according to the principles of interchangeability, of quantity, of passivity, of irresponsibility. Our thoughts retrace the commonplaces dear to public opinion. Our desires are measured in terms of what can be realized thanks to a current bank account. Our dreams pursue models taken on loan from television and movie screens. Our words are inspired by advertising slogans. The very environment that surrounds us is constrained to assume the form most suited to the needs of the market as metropolitan architecture or the massacre of the surroundings brought about for industrial purposes shows. This has reached the point that soon, the very boundary between what is natural and what is artificial will dissolve.

Our identification with a world constructed to the measurement of the bank that even the project of an *other world* doesn't seem

relations of domination and exploitation. Thus, the revolutionary destruction of civilization would simply be the revolutionary destruction of the institutions through which domination and exploitation are maintained. It would not be a return to a supposed Eden or some alleged original Oneness of being. In fact, it would offer no guarantees. It would simply put the capacity to determine our lives back into our own hands-from there it would be up to us to decide what we would do with it.

Naturalizing alienation, casting it in a metaphysical form as the disintegration of an original Oneness, with the consequent vision of a return to an Eden that never was, offers nothing to the insurrectional project. When we recognize that the fundamental form of alienation with which we have to contend is the theft of our capacity to create our live as we desire, it becomes clear that our struggle itself must be where we begin to steal it back by refusing every attempt to institutionalize the struggle, by acting directly and autonomously to destroy the present social order.



houses, thousands of people are waiting. They wait to find out if the United States has effectively executed Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the two Italian anarchists accused of robbery and murder and condemned to death on the electric chair. Never had such an act produced so many repercussions in the world. Arrested in May of 1920, the two anarchists were tried and condemned in July of the following year in spite of the alibi that excused them and the numerous witnesses brought forward by the defense. An impressive campaign in favor of their liberation was begun through out the world involving thousands and thousands of people with very different ideas. In Argentina as well, protest demonstrations, meetings and direct attacks were not lacking: against the US embassy, against the monument to Washington and against American enterprises such as Ford. And, of course, the initiatives in favor of the two anarchists multiplied with the approach of the prophetic date.

The dawn of August 23 found thousands of people still awake, thronging the newsstands in order to read the morning papers. The news flowed from mouth to mouth between the general disbelief and dismay. The law had won. Sacco and Vanzetti had been executed. The announcement of their murder would provoke protest demonstrations everywhere with clashes and incidents. In Argentina, a general strike is called by the central workers on this day. People pour out into the streets as incidents break out on all sides. The names of the two anarchists have become a symbol of the struggle against the outrages of power throughout the world.

This is the situation in which a businessman from Buenos Aires, one Bernardo Gurevich, head of the tobacco firm "Combinados", gets the idea to put a new brand of cigarettes on the market at an economical price intended for the workers. In order to draw attention to the product and attract sales, Gurevich has the brilliant notion to call the cigarette "Sacco and Vanzetti". The business initiative is not appreciated. Speculating on the death of the two anarchists? Mingling the smoke of their bodies burnt on the electric chair with that of cigarettes? Transforming the tears shed for their death into ink for fattening a bank account? Enclosing the rage of others between the dusty lids of a snuff-box? Making an advertising gimmick of the symbol of the

struggle against the state? On November 26, 1927, a powerful charge of dynamite destroys the establishment of "Combinados". The attack is attributed to the same anarchist who was held responsible for other dynamite attacks in support of Sacco and Vanzetti, namely Severino di Giovanni. The damage caused by the explosion is huge. That very day, the businessman who came up with the original idea decides to withdraw the brand of cigarette called "Sacco and Vanzetti".

**France, 1930.** About a half a century has passed since the publication of the Chants of Maldoror by Lautreamont, a book which has subsequently been greeted as "the most radical book of all western literature". This book had gone through many changes of circumstance and might have been destined to fall into oblivion if it had not attracted the attention of the surrealists who get the credit for the recovery and recasting of its author. Already in the spring of 1919, even before building the surrealist movement, Andre Breton had edited the publication of the Poesies of Isadore Ducasse (Lautreamont's given name). In 1927, another surrealist, Philippe Soupault, had edited the first edition of the Complete Works, which would stir up a hornet's nest of controversy. The surrealists would make a kind of precursor, an extreme model, of Lautreamont. For the young in search of a new existence, the work of Lautreamont had nothing to do with literature. The torrential imagination of the "man of Montevideo", his iconoclastic fury, could only constitute an incitement to revolt, the overcoming of this world, an affirmation of one's individuality. Lautreamont sits at Sade's side on the peak of the Black Olympus of the surrealists.

Thus, it is not at all surprising if they don't seem to take pleasure in the news of the imminent opening of a new Parisian nightspot, the "Bar Maldoror". The shopkeeper enterprise wanted to make a menu of Evil, to serve blasphemous imprecations at its tables. It wanted to satisfy the customers' stomachs rather than consume them with doubt. It wanted to quench the fire that burned in the throats of the clients rather than set it to their hearts. It wanted to make people pass a pleasant evening rather than making them all go into a rage. It



without their basis. When our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence is taken from us, we become dependent on the institutions of domination. This situation forces us to separate from environments that are not controlled, environments that have not been institutionalized, and frequently places us into adversarial relationships with these environments. It also forces us to carry out activities that have no immediate relationship to our needs, desires and passions and to enter into relationships the content of which has been determined beforehand by the requirements of the social order.

But often when these latter forms of alienation are discussed, their social basis is forgotten. Rather than finding their source in the alienation of the individual's creative capacities for living which puts them into the service of the dominant social order, these forms are instead traced to the alleged alienation of the individual from a greater whole, an imagined original unity. This idealist version of alienation moves it from the social into the metaphysical. In this form, it may be interesting on a philosophical level, but offers little or nothing for the development of an insurrectional anarchist theory and practice. In fact, it could prove detrimental, making concepts so murky that clarity gets lost.

Consider, for example, the way some primitivists use the word "civilization". This enemy that we are to destroy becomes as nebulous as the original Oneness, Wild Nature or whatever other reified concept one may use to idealize and unify the uncivilized state. The struggle then ceases to be social in nature and begins to take on mystical and psychological connotations. One must free oneself of the civilized mindset in order to reconnect with the Oneness of Wild Nature. Revolution is seen as a return to a past Eden rather than a rupture with the present aimed at the liberation from all constraints and the opening of possibilities.

But civilization is not essentially a mindset, a particular ideological system or a fall from Eden. It is something far more concrete: an ensemble of intertwined institutions-the state, the economy, technological systems, religion, the family, the city, etc.-that work together to precisely to predetermine the conditions under which we exist, thus alienating our capacity to determine our own lives, producing and reproducing social

## THOUGHTS ON ALIENATION

Alienation is a concept frequently talked about in anarchist circles. Clearly, domination and exploitation can only develop in conjunction with alienation, so such discussion is important. But it is necessary to focus this discussion in order to make it useful to the anarchist project of destroying the present order and creating new ways of living.

I have always said that the revolt against the present order of things originates in the individual desire to create one's life as one sees fit. This does not contradict the necessity for class struggle or the desire for communism, but rather provides a basis for clarifying the methods for carrying out this revolutionary project. In terms of the present matter, it provides a basis for understanding alienation and it s relationship to domination and exploitation.

When I talk about alienation, I am talking about a social process through which the institutions of social reproduction wrest our creative energy, our capacity to determine the conditions of our existence from us, placing their alienated form (not just as labor power, but as social roles of all sorts as well) at the service of the ruling order. This social process divides society into classes-the exploited whose capacity to create their lives as they see fit has been taken from them and the exploiters who benefit from this separation by accumulating and controlling the alienated energy in order to reproduce the current society and their own role as its rulers. The struggle of the exploited against the exploiting class thus finds its aim and method in the individual's struggle to realize herself by reappropriating her creative energy, his capacity to determine his life as she sees fit. This struggle must ultimately become collective, but there is no need to wait for the rising of the multitudes in order to begin.

But I often hear the word alienation used in a much more general way. One hears of our alienation from nature, from others and from ourselves. These forms of alienation are not



wanted to make many instead of overturning the world. It was too much.

Already, a few years earlier—in that same 1927 which was shaken by the news of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti—the surrealists had sent an open letter to the committee for the reconstruction of a monument to the poet Rimbaud (a monument that had been destroyed during the first world war) in Charleville, the city of his birth. In that letter, one could read: "Hypocrisy extends its dreadful hand toward the people that we love in order to make them serve in the conservation of that against which they have always fought. It is evident that we are no longer deceived about the range of such enterprises of confiscation, we do not alarm ourselves ore than is necessary at your shameful and habitual maneuvers, persuaded as we are that a force of total fulfillment animates everything that has truly been inspired in the world against you. To us it matters little...that some profit is drawn from the most subversive intelligences, since their marvelous poison will continue to penetrate into the minds of the young in order to corrupt or expand them." Three years later, this literary outpouring of fatalistic wrath would fortunately give place to an action stripped of aestheticism. At the opening of the "Bar Maldoror", Andre Breton and his comrade were there and the completely laid waste to the place. The owner had no choice but to change the name of his business. The name of Lautreamont was saved from the slime of commerce.

* * *

In the face of this determination to prevent money from realizing its commerce over individuals desiring only to see it disappear, in the face of this strenuous defense of the spirit of revolt against the assaults that have come from the shopkeepers' spirit, in the face of these vigorous attacks against mercantile logic, chance does not dwell on how much separated the protagonists of these actions. It is better to leave all the pathetic demands for improbable property rights to the militant and artistic rabble. It is enough to know that, in spite of appearances, the communicating vessels of dream and action have met on the terrain of hatred for all commodification, even if only for a

moment. It doesn't matter what it is: the memory of two executed comrades, the work of a writer, the taste of a meal, the natural environment, an idea. That which is from the heart is an expression of life. And it is never too late to recall that life cannot be reduced to an object of commercial exploitation. It has no price, it only has the claim of having a meaning. Today we are so thoroughly surrounded by commodities, adapted to the act of perpetually putting our hand in our wallet in order to get what is already ours, that nothing seems to touch us any more, nothing seems to come from our hearts. One cannot be filled with love for a plastic wrapped object. We remain with only our indifference, every emotion in us extinguished. When all human expression has been brought back inside the boundaries in which commercial exploitation is possible, when nearly nothing that could not be an object of lucrative activity has survived, when the amount in one's bank account is the best calling card, it is time that brutality takes the upper hand over indifference and resignation.

Christ drove the merchants out of the temple with violence. We know his reason: only god had the right to establish the price of life.

Contrarily, what happened in Argentina and France during these years cleared the board of both the merchants and the temple. It is only a question of taking the advise of a German philosopher and starting to stretch out a hand.



the abandonment of the city to degenerative cities, nothing can be done to impede this inevitable transformation of the totality of the urban environment into a prison that has been immersed in the electronic for sometime, filled with typical prison slavery like rape, sexual extortion, the exchange of favors that ends up being more important than monetary exchange.

At any place in the city, at any hour of the day, millions of urban prisoners watch the same things on television as those prisoners who have been sentenced in a trial and those who are held in custody awaiting trial. The judges themselves do the same, cheering in the same way for a goal by their soccer team.

Today all urban space is watched, controlled, patrolled, feared, distrusted, perpetually threatened. In the name of security, it has gradually reached the point of the creation of an absolute technological-military prison. One can say that this long war will only cease in order to abandon its place to a kind of monstrous prison as an extreme form of "necessary" protection. And this is happening under a democracy that tries to appear powerless, under the egalitarian rhetoric with which it cloaks itself, to prevent—since this is what it wants and needs in order to conserve itself—every city of its dreams from becoming a maximum-security prison space (thus without respite) where the circulation of individuals increasingly resembles the circling of the prisoners round and round that courtyard with the high windowless walls where the poor exhausted footsteps resound in cadence.

aromatic aroma, an edenic glade, within the immense urban prison they administer. Have we really emerged from the courtyard of Newgate? Have we completely given it up, or only taken that marked pajama to the laundry?

The edenic model inspired the providential inclusion of parks—which in name still carry the memory of Paradise (park is a contraction of paradise, Persian pardesh =garden)—in the emerging urban hell. These parks would later be degraded with the name of "green zone". But what did these deceptive patches of paradise really change anyway? The urban glade (avenue or public garden) is not forest, freedom, refuge, free play of the spirit among lives different from the human; it is nothing but human images and, in an increasingly brutal manner, human images signify that which we most abhor: walls that enclose and constrain, jail.

The new prison construction (less somber, sometimes more breathable) was begun by the fascist regime (experimentally, in small cities) in order to reduce the distance between city and prison, destined to form a single, compact, totalitarian poison. We see the prison of Orvieto, built in 1936, the year of the greatest fascist triumph, no different from the Italian Bar, the University of Rome or any youth hostel...But the model totalitarian city, with urban envoys lined up in exchange for liberation from malarial anopheles, was Littoria (Latina) where the prison, built in 1939, is an anonymous service building, a true and proper outpost of the future outskirts. And a modern condominium on the outskirts endures widespread prison conditions. From the ground floor to the penthouse, the cooking is the same everywhere: spaghetti—steak—salad—dessert, just like in a regular prison.

The difference is that the family in the condominium doesn't throw away much food, preserves the leftovers, cooks with more intelligence. The prison, like the barracks or the hospice, wastes a great deal and cooks the same things in a vile manner. No one would ever lick those plates, so often returned full.

Among the traits of liberal democracies at the beginning of this century, this marvel still exists: though specific prison conditions may change in any possible way, in the unstoppable degradation of life in common and of sociality in general on the outside, in



# A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

One hears a lot of talk about privilege in anarchist circles these days. "Male privilege", "white-skin privilege", "first-world privilege and similar phrases come up regularly in discussion, but with no real analysis to back them up, as if everyone should understand exactly what is meant. And, indeed, it is not so difficult to figure out what is meant by these phrases. Their clear implication is that if the oppression and exploitation one suffers in this society is not as intense as that which another suffers, then one is privileged relative to that other person. But such a conception of privilege is useless from an anarchist and revolutionary perspective. It only has meaning in relation to the reformist concept of equality before the law, which is always equality of exploitation and oppression. For those of us who have no interest in rights, but rather want the freedom to determine our own lives and so find the only equality worth pursuing to be equality of access to all that is necessary for determining the conditions of our existence—that is, for those of us for whom the destruction of the social order and the revolutionary transformation of reality are the essential first steps toward making our lives our own—a very different concept of privilege must be developed.

We live in a class society. This has been true since the accumulation of wealth and power into a few hands gave rise to the state and capital. The few who rule determine the conditions under which everyone exists, institutionalizing social relations that maintain and expand their control over wealth and power. The ruling class structures these relations in such a way that the survival of the exploited classes depends upon their continued participation in the reproduction of these relationships, thus guaranteeing the continuation of class society. Thus, it can be said that the ruling class structures social relationships in such a way that the continued reproduction of society will always privilege the ruling class and its needs. In any class society—

thus, in any society in which the state and the economy exist—only the ruling class can be truly said to have privilege.

But the ruling class does not impose itself upon a passive populace. The history of class society is always the history of class struggle, the history of the exploited trying to take their lives and the social conditions under which they exist back in order to determine them for themselves. Thus, it is in the interest of the ruling class to structure social relations in such a way as to create divisions within the exploited classes that cloud their understanding of the nature of their struggle and of their enemy. The ruling class accomplishes this through various institutions, identities and ideologies such as nation, race, gender, occupation, sexual preference and so on. It is not hard to see how the ruling class uses these structures for its ends. It grants people in specific social categories particular "privileges" defined in terms of that category. But being granted a privilege by those who define your life on their terms is not the same thing as having privilege. This becomes especially clear when anyone who is not of the ruling class steps out of line. Their so-called privileges can quickly disappear.

Furthermore, these "privileges" granted by the ruling order to people in certain social categories among the exploited actually do amount to nothing more than a lessening of the intensity of exploitation and oppression experienced by these people relative to others. Thus, men are less likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted than women and tend to receive greater compensation for the same level of exploitation at the job. White people are less likely to be harassed by cops or to be charged with felonies for victimless crimes and sentenced to years in prison than non-white people and find it easier to get a job. Heterosexuals generally do not have to worry about being beaten or ostracized because of their sexual preference. The list could go on, but I think the point is clear. All of these so-called privileges are nothing more than a minimal easing of the conditions of exploitation experienced by people in these specific social categories. They are intended to convince these people that they have more in common with their exploiters than with those not granted the same "privileges" and to convince the others that



# THE WALLS OF THE CITY

by C. G.

(translated from *Diavolo in Corpo* #3)

Prison is only apparently the exception to the rule: crime given vent to or innocence punished is in fact the totality of society where everyone punishes each other for the offense of being there and where anyone who thinks is pierced this question at least once a day: "Why have they put me here? What have I done?" and the terribly obsessive desire for escape is just like that of prisoners. Maybe even more intense.

The evolution of the penitentiary system with the construction of so many new spaces for punishment has a significance beyond that of "more humanity and reeducation" rather than retributive suffering. The distance, the separation between the city and its prison—which has always been very great—decreases, because the inhabitants of the city increasingly resemble (through work, family, universities, hospitals, discotheques, theaters, stadiums) prisoners of a model prison who are granted occasional leaves (weekends, holidays, "white" weeks) with the obligation of returning on specific days with no room for error.

Even the "promenade" is a mirror of the city within the prison and of the prison within the city. The people guarded on their pedestrian islands, enclosed by flowering bushes as walls, going sadly and monotonously in and out of shopping centers, loaded with useless but obligatory purchases. The people watched by video cameras in the shops and outside, forced to pass through metal detectors to enter a bank, constrained to stamp a railway ticket, whispering at every instant that ignoble secretion of personal identity that is the fiscal code, invention of the gulag. Do you believe this is very different from a prison?

I can see the courtyard of Newgate—where the prisoners in pajamas march around in rows in a circle in the famous Dore incision—once again every time I walk through any pedestrian island, special project of mayors preoccupied with having an

must be saved at all costs", to lend themselves to managing existing alienation in an alternative way, but always based on exploitation and oppression.

We think that the struggle against the domination of human over human is the only basis from which to start. It is the only one capable of attacking those responsible for the destruction of both the planet and social wealth. We must aim concretely towards the liberation of humanity and nature in the global sense.

The greens and environmentalists are so-called ecologists whose aim is not a clean ecological planet; their politics are a green apartheid that wants "green islands" destined to the comfort of the privileged. The international environmental associations are the multinationals of "ecology", capitalism revised and corrected following the damage done by its preceding phase of maximum industrialization.

The social struggle in the ecological sense is valid only if it strikes the relationships of dominion, the structures of capital and the state, showing its subversive force that contains the prospect of a new world, not the alternative management of the old.



their real enemy is not the ruling class, but rather those granted a less intense level of exploitation.

In this light, moralistic calls to recognize one's own privilege and give it up are meaningless. They serve no purpose in the creation of a revolutionary project aimed at the destruction of all rule. As we have seen, the so-called privileges enumerated in the mea culpas of guilt ridden radicals are really nothing more than means for constructing social identities that serve the ruling class by producing artificial divisions among those they exploit. So if we want to move the revolutionary project of destroying all rule and privilege forward, then our task is not to give up some phantom privilege that has never really been our own, but to expose and move beyond the artificial identities that smother our individuality and cripple us in our battle against the ruling order. Since only the ruling class truly has privilege, the destruction of privilege will only occur when we destroy all rule.

# THE CATASTROPHE PSYCHOSIS

*(Reprinted from Insurrection, September 1989)*

For a long time now there has been a terroristic blackmail in act leading to more and more recourse to the policeman-like logic of emergency. The media carries out the task of upturning problems and using the apocalyptic images of the imminence of catastrophe pushing great masses of people to mobilize to avoid it.

One should ask oneself what lies behind the picture presented by the media of the impending nightmare of ecological catastrophe. This is presented as a problem to be resolved beyond the realms of social relations or class conflict.

We have strong doubts about the show of good intentions made by politicians of every kind and color (including the environmentalists) and their sudden interest in the population's health.

We think that behind the bombardment of news concerning the ecological red alert in the areas of high industrial concentration where atmospheric pollution safety levels have been amply surpassed, there lies another far less noble battle: a battle for power between the old capitalist-industrial class and the new ascending one constituted of the public and private bureaucracy in view of the position the latter have reached within the technological apparatus of capital and the state.

We know that the image of catastrophe, in this case the ecological one, emotively pushes the mass to fight beyond any motivation coming from their own specific condition of exploitation, not so much for social change but to save their own threatened survival. That pushes them to adopt the reasoning leading to the conservation of the present social order.

The planet is dying, we all know it. It is full of poison and lacking in oxygen because of atmospheric pollution. The rivers are biologically dead; lakes and seas are reduced to dustbins; a



greenhouse effect is produced by the raising of the levels of carbon dioxide thanks also to the massive work of deforestation of one of the main lungs of the earth, the Amazon forest. Growing drought is causing the extension of vast new deserts, and we are assisting in the tragedy of peoples and animal species on their way to extinction, sacrificed to the logic of profit and dominion.

Every class that aspires to domination brings with it its own world and its own logic. The ascending bureaucrats are using ecology to accelerate the process of taking over the old world.

But what can that cause in the mass, increasingly terrified by the possibility of catastrophe and interiorizing the logic of emergency, if not total adhesion to the repressive codes of behavior dictated by cybernetic power. With scientific punctuality it is inviting millions of proletarianized individuals to participate and mobilize alongside e the institutions to create and institute new organisms of control and to sanction new authorities under the thrust of a new democratic radicalism.

Beyond its immediate drama, the Chernobyl nuclear accident gave capital and all the states the chance to coldly experiment elements upon which to apply the repressive projects of control and consensus, precisely by exploiting the idea of a permanent state of emergency.

The emergency intervention therefore does not resolve the problem but serves to install control in order to eliminate conflict over the social territory through the blackmail of duty to collaboration between classes. All the emergency measures that are presented as being necessary for the general social interest, in actual fact give way to a process of privilege and submission given the inequality of existing material conditions.

The greens and environmental associations are not looking for a solution to the problem of pollution but to a capillary and spreading control in order to make it a source of profit. One discovers that the least polluted parts of the cities are areas destined to the higher social strata; the poor get square meters of cement and waste dumps on the outskirts.

It is time then, instead of giving acritical praise to such forces, to unmask their role as the new social pacifiers who are going beyond the spectacle rigged on the blackmail that "the planet